



THE COMMUNICATOR

Grant County Employee Newsletter

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Grant County Office of Emergency Management

The emergency management office is a county department, with the chief responsibility of ensuring that Grant County is prepared for the emergencies or disasters that are likely to happen in our area. Our ultimate goal is to minimize the impact that these events have on the people that live within our county. Our office works with the cities, villages, and townships within Grant County, as well as county, state and federal agencies and organizations, to write and update emergency plans for many contingencies, and to implement mitigation strategies to decrease the damages and dangers of disaster events.

When an event happens, our office works directly with the affected communities and residents to help return life back to normal. Recent natural disasters include county-wide flash flooding in May of 2000 and June of 2004, the 2001 Mississippi River Flood, and a May 2002 flash flooding event that affected the western portion of the county and the Village of Cassville. Since 2000, Grant County communities and residents have received over \$5 Million in disaster assistance.

Since our office is primarily funded through state and federal grant dollars, much of the activity that we do in a

year is set forth in a negotiated 'plan of work' with the state of Wisconsin, which lists expectations that our department will accomplish within the grant year. The responsibilities and authorities of our department are set forth in Chapter 166 of Wisconsin Statutes.

Our office is also responsible for the administration of the Grant County Local Emergency Planning committee, which exists to address the community and public-safety issues that are related to the use and transport of hazardous chemicals in our area. Our office writes emergency response preplans for 31 industrial, municipal, and business facilities and 45 farms that use or transport extremely hazardous chemicals in Grant County. The LEPC is also working to establish a level B hazardous materials response team in our county.

Much of our time is spent working with the fire departments, emergency medical services, law enforcement agencies, hospitals, and numerous health, human service, and other agencies located in Grant County that may be called upon to respond to a large-scale emergency or disaster. In addition to the planning, training, and exercising that our office conducts each year, we also assist these departments in building capacity, primarily by assisting them with obtaining grant funding. Over the past three years, Grant County fire departments have received nearly \$1 Million through FEMA's Assistance to Firefighters program,

and have received more overall grant awards than any other county in the State of Wisconsin. This funding has been used to purchase basic fire-fighting equipment such as turnout gear, helmets, boots, air packs, and radios—all things that a fire department can't function without.

In recent years, our department has taken on the responsibility of homeland security planning for Grant County, as well as for administering domestic preparedness planning and equipment grants. Since 2000, Grant County has obtained over \$400,000 in domestic preparedness funding, which has been used on a number of projects to better prepare public safety responders to handle a variety of threats. Major projects that were funded with homeland security dollars include the upgrade of radio and 9-1-1 telecommunications consoles in the county dispatch center, the installation of communications repeaters to greatly improve radio communications capability for fire and EMS services, the purchase of response trailers for hazardous materials and mass-casualty incidents, and the purchase of personal protective equipment for law enforcement officers throughout the county. Our office has also secured an additional \$325,000 in homeland security grant money to fund the creation of a regional technical rescue team made up of firefighters, emergency medical responders, and law enforcement officers from Grant, Crawford, and Richland Counties.



What is COBRA?

Submitted by Dawn Mergen, Personnel Specialist

Anyone wishing to have a specific subject discussed in a future newsletter may contact Joyce Roling at 723-2045.

COBRA is a Federal Act that requires most group health plans give employees and their families the opportunity to continue health and dental insurance coverage for 18 to 36 months when there is a "qualifying event" that would result in the loss of coverage under an employer's plan provided the employee pays the full required premium. Each qualified beneficiary who elects continuation coverage will have the same rights and coverage level under the Plan as other participants or beneficiaries covered under the Plan, including open enrollment and special enrollment rights.

When employees lose their coverage due to a voluntary reduction of hours, resignation, or termination, COBRA information is automatically given to the employee and the dependents/spouse covered at the time of the qualifying event.

Employees must notify the employer when a dependent child ceases to satisfy the requirements of a dependent. Notification to the employer must also be made if the employee becomes divorced. A form is available from the Personnel Department if you wish to make written notification of the change, but verbal notification will be accepted.

If you have any questions concerning your COBRA coverage rights you should contact the Grant County Personnel Department (608)723-2540.

COBRA = Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act

Spring is here...

Spring is finally here and we are feeling nature's call to break out of our winter routine and get outside. We are fortunate to have so many outdoor fun resources in our area.



Bike Trails

Hirsch Farm (Platteville)
The Rountree Branch Trail (Platteville)
Lead Mines Bicycle Tour (Cassville)

Mini Golf

Mound View Inn (Platteville)

Golf Courses

Birchwood Golf (Kieler)
Cole Acres (Cuba City)
Hickory Grove (Fennimore)
Lancaster Municipal Golf Course
Platteville Golf Club

Hiking

Wyalusing State Park
Nelson Dewey State Park (Cassville)
Military Ridge State Park (Dodgeville)
Governor Dodge State Park (Dodgeville)
Climb the M in Platteville

Camping

Wyalusing State Park
River of Lakes (Bagley)
Yogi Bear's Jellystone Park (Bagley)
Big H Campground (Cassville)
Whitetail Bluff (Cassville)
Rustic Barn Campground (Kieler)
Klondyke Secluded Acres (Lancaster)
Grant River Recreation Area (Potosi)
Mound View Park (Platteville)

Canoeing

Mississippi River
Wisconsin River
Grant River
Platte River

Fishing

Mississippi River
Wisconsin River
Rattlesnake Creek
Grant River
Little Platte River
Big Platte River

Horseback Riding

Double A Ranch (Darlington)

Other Fun Ideas

Plant some flower seeds
Gardening
Picnic at your city's parks
Take walks with friends
Shoot hoops
Rollerblade
Play catch
Enjoy an evening on your patio

***...so get out there
and celebrate life!!***

(Sources: 2005 Hidden Valley Visitor's Guide & 2005 Grant County, Wisconsin Travel Planner)